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United States Department of Agriculture,

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COWPEAS (*Vigna unguiculata*).

The cowpea is a native of India, but it has been grown in this country for about a hundred and forty years and has long been recognized as a valuable crop for the Southern States. With the introduction of new varieties within comparatively recent years, the cultivation of this crop has extended into the Northern States. The cowpea is a valuable crop in various ways. It is one of the strongest growing annual legumes, and when well inoculated draws heavily upon the nitrogen supply of the air, and therefore is a good soil renovator. It can be cut for hay and if properly cured is excellent forage. The cowpea is sometimes sown in combination with other crops, such as sorghum, millet, and soy beans, for hay. It is valuable for pasture and can be used for soiling. It is not suitable for ensilage unless mixed with corn. It is an excellent green-manure crop, greatly increasing the supply of humus and nitrogen in the soil.

Seeding.—Cowpeas may be either sown in drills or broadcasted, depending upon the purpose for which the crop is grown. For the production of seed, they should be sown in rows 30 to 36 inches apart, requiring about 30 pounds of seed to the acre. For hay or green-manuring the best method is to broadcast with a grain drill, using about 60 pounds to the acre. Thin planting should be the practice in sections of light rainfall, and comparatively thick planting when there is ample moisture. Seeding should be done when the soil is warm and not too wet, as the seed will then germinate very readily. The land should be well prepared before seeding to obtain the best results.

Seed.—Cowpea seed for planting should be fresh and of good quality. The seed deteriorates rapidly and when more than two years old should not be planted. Cowpea seed is subject to attack from the pea weevil. By treating the stored peas with carbon bisulphid this insect can be held in check.

Varieties.—The cowpea is grown under a great many variety names, but there are comparatively few varieties which are of prime importance. Even the more important ones are found under different names in various sections of the country. The varieties of cowpeas are distinguished most readily by the color and size of the seed, though they differ in earliness, habit, etc. Following are brief notes regarding the more important varieties.

Whippoorwill.—This is undoubtedly the best general-purpose variety and the one most commonly grown. It is early maturing, vigorous, fairly erect, yields well in both hay and grain, and is satisfactory to grow in cornfields or as a green manure. The seed is mottled chocolate on a buff or reddish ground color. It is also known under the names of Speckled Bunch, Speckled, and Shinney.

New Era.—This is the most erect of the commercial cowpeas. It is about two weeks earlier than the Whippoorwill. It is a small grower in vine, but usually a larger seed yielder than the Whippoorwill. The seed is bluish in color, owing to the many minute blue specks on a gray ground.

Groit.—This is very similar to the New Era and is often confused with that variety. It is a hybrid between the New Era and the Whippoorwill. It makes a larger growth and fruits more heavily than the New Era. It matures about the same time. The seed is similar to the New Era but has chocolate mottlings in addition to the blue specks.

Brabham.—This is a hybrid between the Whippoorwill and the Iron. It is similar in growth to the Whippoorwill but is about ten days later, a trifle more viny, and holds its leaves better on ripening. It is immune to wilt and root-knot, the same as the Iron variety. It is especially adapted to growing on sandy soils.

Iron.—Similar to the Whippoorwill but more viny and a little later. It is immune to wilt and root-knot, which makes it especially valuable where these diseases are found. It holds its leaves well on ripening. The seed is about the size of that of the New Era and light clay or buff in color.

Clay.—Very viny, late, and usually light in seed yield. Not very largely grown and not desirable on account of its light seed crop. It is a good variety to grow on poor soils for green manure. The seed is clay colored.

Unknown, or Wonderful.—The largest growing cowpea. It is very similar in habit to the Iron and about as erect as the Whippoorwill, but much more viny and not nearly as good a seed producer. It holds its leaves when ripening and matures late. The seed is hard to distinguish from that of the Clay.

Black.—Not grown much except locally. This variety is usually low growing and viny, with a small yield of seed. It matures late. In sandy soil it does fairly well. The seed is black.

Suggestions.—Cowpea seed can be produced most abundantly on a sandy or sandy loam soil of moderate fertility. Communities having such soil conditions would do well to produce cowpea seed on a large scale, availing themselves of all the best machinery for handling the crop. This would mean mowers with bunching or side-delivery attachments and the most approved thrasher for getting out the seed. This would be a profitable line of farming. In the present status of the cowpea industry communities are likely to be growing only a single variety, which may not be the best one. The production of seed on a large scale in certain areas would soon do away with the large number of local varieties, and thus greatly help the industry.

W. J. MORSE,

Scientific Assistant, Forage-Crop Investigations.

